A REPORT ON THE RELIGIOUS, CULTURAL, AND HUMANITARIAN PROBLEMS.

1. Question : What is the situation of the Catholic Church in East Timor?

Answer : For the reply to this question, I present the problem in three periods : 1) The Church up to 1975; 2) The Church in the war period : 3) The Church in 1985....

1) The Church up to 1975.

The history of the Catholic Church in East Timor has suffered highs and lows. The beginning of proper good quality evangelism began in 1875, and had its first interruption in 1910 with the expulsion of the missionaries. The work of evangelism was recommenced by the church, to become implanted and wide spread until 1942 when the church became a mere trace during the invasion by the Japanese. There remained 8 clergy in Timor, another 10 went to Australia. The cathederal at Dili was bombed, missionary residences incinerated, closing the mission schools. There were more than 30,000 Catholics. As an interium on 12th October 1945, a Bishop, named Dom Jaime Garcia Goulart, was elected for the diocese of Dili. Then on 9th December 1945 the new Bishop entered and took up the shattered Diocese. With eight missionaries, he commenced the phase of revitalisation and expansion, until the new war conflict occurring in 1975. Up to that date here was the church's situation, there was a population of 688,769 inhabitants, of which 220,310 were Catholics, and 400,000 were animists or pagans. In order to communicate with the Catholics there were working in the Diocese, 44 priests, 33 Diocesians, 6 Jesuit missionaries, 16 Salesian missionaries, 32 Conossians, 16 Dominician Sisters, 4 Carmelites, and 4 servants of the Sacred Family. The 19 Parishes had 55 schools with 10,263 juvenile students.

2) Period of War

On 25 April 1974, a change occurred in the political regime in Lisboa, Portugal. In Timor, the political parties UDT, Fretilin, and Apodeti were formed, each one with its own ideals and political programs. On 11th August 1975, UDT unleached a coup d'etat, with the consequences of a counter coup by Fretilin. It was this period of confusion and civil war, that caused the invasion of the Indonesian forces on 7th December 1975. On 17th July 1976, they announced the "formal Integration" into the Republic of Indonesia.

The position of the Catholic Church : the end of liasion with Portugal. Timor remained a separate Ecclesiastic Province of Goa and of the Portuguese Episcopal Conference. Ending in effect the Concordat (agreement between State and Church) of 1940 and the Missionary Accord, from which the Church had received certain favours from the State.

This caused the exit of missionaries and other religous personnel to Atambua, Australia, and Portugal. The schools remained closed. The seminary bombed. Some missionaries nevertheless remained at their posts. The residential Bishop, Dom Jose Jaoquim Ribeiro was withdrawn. The Diocese of Dili passed to the direct control of the Holy See, and they nominated an Apostolic Administrator in the person of Martino da Costa Lopes, a native of Timor. Little by little the church reorganised itself in the new existing socio-political system.

3) The Church in 1985

At this moment the Church in Timor is florishing and spreading to all corners of the territory, which has changed the religious panorama, to now having more Catholics than Animists. The statistics of 1984 : Population 578,000 inhabitants, of these 438,000 were Catholics, 30,000 were Catechists, and 100,000 were Animists. The Missions and Parish centres are growing in number. The evangelisation reaches out into the administrative districts. Noting the opposite movement of pastroral attendance. Previously the christians of the land would come to the diocese mission for the important celebrations, such as Christmas and Easter. Today it is the priest who goes to the posts every month, or every sunday. Everywhere there are adherants among the masses who are christians, who experience the dangers from superficial christianity, by lacking real cultural points of view and deep association. Merely for the large number of celebrations, as in the corn harvest....so little. There are 36 clergy, of whom there are 18 Diocesians, 8 Salesians, 7 Verbitas and 3 Jesuits. In the female congregation there are 5 orders with 48 sisters or nuns. Many of the catechists are permanent as volunteers, the number being around 900.

Delicate problems : the existence of other religions : Islams grow in number with integration. Now about 15,000, the majority of whom came from the outside. There are areas (Likisa, Same, Lospalos), where many christians have converted to Islam.

The Protestants form the second group with ample devotees. In these religions there has come to light some problems : a challenge to win followers and in the scope of knowledge; relaxation in morals (influence of Islam), divorce which is multiplying, and corruption among the youth.

Among the true christians there appears to be still one belief that they have not grown out of. They worship God and "Maromak" (the one supreme being in Animist religion) at the same time in the practice of religion, but they do not allow performance of the pagan customs of idols and of the death ceremonies.

We can say that the Church has a true personality that it has become enrooted in the people. The people see it as a column of support for their own human and spiritual aspirations. It has a big influence on the Timorese people because the authorities want it to serve them for certain political ends. The government (both military and civil) have utilised the process of "pendekatan Gereja" (bringing the church closer), that is the approach to the church to finally conquer the Bishop, the Priests, and Catechists as a means of understanding the government's policy and to colaborate with them for "Keamanan" (security), it is said that Fretilin are communists and that the better way for the Timorese people is integration into Indonesia. It is this tactic that today is utilised by the military. It is a continuing temptation of "omnia tibi dabo, si cadens adoraveris me..." (I give you all, if you adore me)

In this new situation the Church is confronted with two particular problems :

1) The existence in Timor of Indonesian christians, priests, and religious personnel from other Indonesian Dioceses.

2) The existence of "the Department of Religion" and the doctrine of "Pancasila".

1) Much of the first problem we get upholding our peculiarities or following what is done in other Dioceses. There is a danger to follow the easier liturgy of the hymn, of the prayer, of the catechism. The entry of "Mawi" will be to adopt all that is done in other Dioceses.... From the other

side, we will not be able to have a church "ghetto". We will have the presence of dualism, which will cause apprehension between the christians and the clergy. What is the solution?

2) The Department of Education constitutes one governmental instance without which it would not be possible to live today. There are Jakarta programs which must be followed. There are government laws which must be observed. We must colaborate, because it is through them that we receive massive assistance for the huge constructions. Herein we adopt a method of sincere colaboration, but also an independant spirit and not in servility Before the end of this section on the actual situation of the Church, I take the liberty of emphasising two aspects:

a.- The Diocese of Dili is a "vacant seat". This situation has existed for eight years. We are not able to make the deep decisions for the renovation of the Diocese, because of the temporary character of the "Ordinarius Loci" (the bishop). Now is only the time for thought by the residential Bishop, who uses all the facilities that the law confers on the governor, to correct and repair the Diocese. In my poor opinion, I believe that really in this political vagueness, it can nominate a residential Bishop, in order to obtain more clarity on the many religious subjects like those that have a connection with the social-political life.

b.- The entry of the MAWI. Before speaking about the entry or non-entry of the MAWI, I think it is more urgent to think about instituting a hierarchy in East Timor, that is to say, the existence of an Ecclesiastic Province that embodies the actual Diocese with the seat in Dili, and the creation of two more with a seat in Baukau (Eastern part) and Maliana (Western part). All the Timorese Missions form a unitary body in their type of faith and pastoral procedures. Furthermore the missionary influence is Portuguese. One which does not correspond much with the characteristics of the adjoining Diocese of Nusatenggara Timur. However this is merely a suggestion that only comes from the head of the author on these lines, but a general opinion of the clergy of Dili assembled together in Lahane between 15 - 18th January 1985.

2. Question - The respect that is or is not given to the cultural identity of the population?

In reply to this question allow me to distinguish:

a) The civilised class, the illiterate and the young people who actually attend school.(translator: those in daily contact with Indonesians)

b) The people in general, the illiterate, those living in the countryside.

a) Many of the first group find difficulty to live by the proper Timorese culture. Whether they want to or not they have to think with the thoughts of Indonesians. The language used is the cliche language of the governor, the deportment to adopt in public is that of the governor. In the schools the programs are national programs, to act, to think, and to speak Indonesian, imposed in all aspects. Where can there be a contrary reaction? Where is the Timorese culture or institution that possesses influence on the Timorese with their own way of being, of thought, of performance? Only in the Church with its liturgy, with its pastoral and catechist practices is there a guarantee for the culture of the Timorese population.

The standard of the folklore, of the practices and customs, and the traditions that are indigenous, why it is inferior, because it is of a defeated people it is not developed, not enriched, and not preserved. They follow

the things of Java and of Bali.... In our schools the students feel inferior when they present an indigenous dance...All laugh...

b) Many of the illiterate majority that were never connected with the Portuguese culture, are also not connected with the Indonesians, because of the Indonesian treatment. They continue with their own non-christian customs and traditions. It is this category of people that the church are striving to improve, christianise and conserve.

3. Question : How are the Catholic schools going in relation to the Indonesian Government?

1. Some statistics on the institutions of the 92 church schools:
   a) 74 primary schools (SDK-Sekolah dasar Katoloik)
      (SDK-School based on Catholicism)
   b) 11 secondary schools (SMPK)
   c) 1 SMA (secondary)
   d) 1 STM (technical)
   e) 1 SPGK (teacher's training school)
   f) 1 SPGA (for training religious teachers and Catechists)
   g) 1 ST (technical)
   i) 1 infant school

Students: 23,644; teachers: 424. Of these 317 are paid by the government and 65 by the Diocese (Foundation of St.Paul)

2. The government are helping very much to pay the teachers, and are helping to construct some schools. The head of the Education Services is ready to help in the schools of the Diocese. This does not say there are no problems. Because the teachers are paid by the government, the state makes changes or calls when they want, without advising the Ecclesiatic Authorities.

The teaching is the teaching of the official Indonesian programs. It is not commensurate with the freedom of establishing a school where it gives independant teaching, or where the teaching is in Portuguese, or Tetun. All is Indonesian.

The schools represent the gravest problem for the Diocese, precisely because we have no economic means to pay the teachers, to fund new schools. We struggle with the shortage of teachers and money. We do not have hostile governmental politics against the church schools. The government is prepared to help and to improve.

In 1984 in Baukau, there was a doubt regarding the mission school, and the students were imprisoned and maltreated, but it was a single case. Nothing happened to the remainder. A notice was send out that they obey the advise of the authorities, especially those fanatical islam military who have been instigating a campaign against the missions and schools.

4. Question : How can the Church act in the social and assisting works?

1) First of all, we have to have a standard for the Diocese, a central organisation, which co-ordinates all the help offered to persons and institutions. At this moment there is no central organisation. Moreover there does not exist one person dedicating full time to this sector. That is serious and urgent for a Diocese like ours, where there is much poverty. That is not to say that we do not have social work. Each Mission takes into account beforehand this project which they adapt to their own possible needs. The Apostolic Administrator channels help for the refugees, orphans and general medicine through the missionaries. Therefore the major need of this project is the shortage of fulltime clergy on social matters.

2) Difficulties set up by the military authorities. They feel envy be-

cause the Church does so much for the people. The Church has medical clinics, orphanages, and help the population with tractors. This does not please the military authorities. So they place difficulties on us, by not recognising our nurses, not allowing us to import medicine, to the point of purposely making life difficult for the personnel of the mission.

A dream at present by the Apostolic Administrator is the foundation of a Catholic hospital in Dili or on the outskirts of the capital. For this he has made an invitation to the Nuns CB. They are studing the proposal.

In the state hospitals, they poorly treat people, or there are no medicines. When people go there it is to die. Therefore, it is urgent to have a Catholic hospital, where the sick can have benevolent attention, and where to serve signifies true christian charity, and not merely an employment whose surpose is money.

Dili, 17th February 1985,

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